

Message Text

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SUBJECT: GSICARD'S VISIT TO GABON

SUMMARY: STATE VISIT TO GABON AUGUST 5-8 BY FRENCH PRESIDENT VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING ENDED WITH COMMUNIQUE STRESSING IDENTITY OF VIEWS OF GOF AND GOG ON SOUTHERN AFRICA AND NIEO AND COMMITTING FRANCE TO CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR GABONESE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. FRENCH PRESIDENT VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING PAID STATE VISIT TO GABON AUGUST 5-8 WHICH INCLUDED VISITS TO PORT GENTIL AND FRANCEVILLE IN ADDITION TO TIME SPENT IN CAPITAL. HE RECEIVED ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION FROM LOCAL FRENCH COMMUNITY AND WELL-ORGANIZED WELCOME FROM BALANCE OF LOCAL POPULATION, WHILE PRESS AND RADIO/TELEVISION PROVIDED EXTENSIVE COVERAGE VIRTUALLY TO EXCLUSION ALL OTHER SUBJECTS.

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2. APART FROM CEREMONIAL OCCASIONS, KEY INTEREST OF VISIT

FOCUSED ON EXCHANGE OF DINNER TOASTS AUGUST 5 AND ON GISCARD PRESS CONFERENCE AND JOINT COMMUNIQUE AUGUST 7. THESE SUBSTANTIVE OCCASIONS ALL FOCUSED ON SAME THREE PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS: FRENCH AID, NIEO, AND SOUTHERN AFRICA.

3. FRENCH AID: GISCARD PLEDGED CONTINUED GOF SUPPORT FOR GABONESE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN VARIETY OF FIELDS. WHILE DINNER TOAST ONLY MADE SPECIFIC MENTION OF AGRICULTURAL FIELD, COMMUNIQUE INCLUDES COMMITMENTS OF FRENCH ASSISTANCE FOR STUDIES AND EVENTUAL CONSTRUCTION OF GRAND POUBARA DAM AND HYDROELECTRIC COMPLEX; NTOUM CEMENT PROJECT; FERRO-MANGANESE PLANT; PROJECTS IN TRANSPORT, MINERAL EXPLORATION, AND AGRICULTURAL FIELDS; BUILDING AND EQUIPPING OF POLYTECHNIC SCHOOL IN FRANCEVILLE AND MILITARY HOSPITAL IN LIBREVILLE; TRAINING OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MERCHANT MARINE PERSONNEL IN FRENCH SPECIALIZED SCHOOLS; AND CONTINUED SUPPLY OF TEACHERS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PERSONNEL UNDER NEW GLOBAL ACCORDS. GISCARD MADE CLEAR IN PRESS CONFERENCE THAT FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN POUBARA CONSTRUCTION (WHICH HE ESTIMATED AT 1.3 TO 1.6 BILLION FRENCH FRANCS) WILL DEPEND ON RESULTS OF FEASIBILITY STUDIES, AND USED SAME OCCASION TO NOTE THAT FRENCH ROLE IN EXTENSION OF TRANSGABON RAILROAD ALSO REMAINS TO BE DECIDED ON BASIS OF FUTURE STUDIES AND GOG REQUEST. GISCARD ESTIMATED FRENCH CONTRIBUTION TO FINANCING OF CEMENT PLANT AND FERRO-MANGANESE PLANT AT 400 MILLION FRENCH FRANCS EACH, AND GAVE TOTAL FIGURE FOR FRENCH AID TO MAJOR PROJECTS OF 2.3 BILLION FRENCH FRANCS.

4. NIEO: BONGO WELCOMED GISCARD IN DINNER TOAST AS LEADING PROTAGONIST OF NIEO, AND LATTER'S REPLY INCLUDED REAFFIRMATION OF SUPPORT FOR "FAIRER AND MORE EQUITABLE" INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM. ONE REASON FOR SUCH ADVOCACY, GISCARD NOTED, WAS THAT FRANCE ALONE CANNOT MEET DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF ITS FRIENDS, SO THAT NIEO REQUIRED IN ORDER ENABLE THEM TO MEET THEIR GOALS. COMMUNIQUE OFFERED JOINT APPEAL FOR NIEO WHICH WILL "GUARANTEE PRODUCING COUNTRIES FAIR RETURN FOR RAW MATERIALS" AND "ASSURE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES MEANS FOR CONTINUED ECONOMIC EXPANSION," BUT ONLY SPECIFIC WAS CALL FOR NEW AND GREATER EFFORT BY INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS TO AID DEVELOPMENT PROCESS. IN PRESS CONFERENCE, GISCARD MADE CLEAR THAT REFERENCE

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WAS TO HIS OWN PROPOSAL FOR SOLIDARITY FUND, AND ADDED THAT GOG HAD AGREED BE "CONTRIBUTOR" TO SUCH FUND IN VIEW OF MAGNITUDE ITS RESOURCES. GISCARD CONCLUDED THAT GOF PLANS CALL FOR MEETING OF OFFICIALS FROM COUNTRIES CONCERNED AT "ECONOMIC DIRECTOR" LEVEL TO BEGIN WORK ON MODALITIES FOR FUND.

5. SOUTHERN AFRICA: COMMUNIQUE AND SPEECHES WERE UNIFORMLY MILD ON SOUTHERN AFRICA, NOTING COMMON HOPE THAT PROBLEMS CAN

BE RESOLVED THROUGH APPLICATION OF "DIALOGUE AND TOLERANCE" AND (IN BONGO'S WORDS) "WITHOUT SPILLING BLOOD." GISCARD AND BONGO JOINTLY AND SEPARATELY CONDEMNED APARTHEID AND URGED THAT PROBLEMS BE LEFT ESSENTIALLY TO AFRICANS FOR SOLUTION WITHOUT INTRUSION OF "WORLD HEGEMONIES" (GISCARD'S TERM), BUT OTHERWISE OFFERED NO SPECIFICS.

6. COMMENT: BOTH SIDES WERE CLEARLY PLEASED WITH VISIT AND ITS RESULTS, WHICH APPEAR PARTICULARLY POSITIVE FOR GOG IN VIEW SUBSTANTIAL COMMITMENTS OF FRENCH AID CONTAINED IN COMMUNIQUE. VISIT SHOULD ALSO SERVE STILL ANY REMAINING ANXIETIES IN RESIDENT FRENCH COMMUNITY AFTER SERIES OF INCIDENTS WHICH FOLLOWED BONGO'S MARCH 11 SPEECH, AND WHICH IN ANY EVENT HAD FAIRLY WELL DIED OUT IN RECENT MONTHS.

7. EMBASSY WILL CHECK WITH RESPONSIBLE GOG OFFICIALS HOW PROSPECTS OF AMERICAN FIRMS WILL BE AFFECTED BY AGREEMENTS REACHED WITH GOF, NOTABLY WITH REGARD TO GRAND POUBARA STUDIES FOR WHICH TWO US COMPANIES HAD BEEN PLANNING MAKE PROPOSALS AT GOG REQUEST. STEIGMAN

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